

# Child Support Report



OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

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## Inside This Issue

<b>Commissioner's Voice: Minority Male Health—We Can Help to Paint a Brighter Picture</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Osage Nation Offers TIP to Help Parents Avoid Incarceration</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Northern Arapaho Tribe to Host NTCSA Conference in June</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>D.C. Makes a Movie to Show Customers the Changing Face of Child Support Services</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>U.S. Supreme Court Hears South Carolina Case</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Puerto Rico's Child Support Kiosks—Quick and Easy for Customers</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Pennsylvania's Award-Winning Web Portal: Improving Customer Service, Performance, Efficiency</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Princeton Students Present Their Research to OCSE</b>	<b>10</b>



## National Minority Health Month

### How Child Support Can Help Eliminate Health Disparities

By Crystal Rodriguez  
OCSE

April is National Minority Health Month, sponsored by the HHS Office of Minority Health, and a good time to highlight some recent research about minorities and health insurance in our country. This research, along with our experience in the program, is leading to wider opportunities for the child support program to help eliminate health disparities while increasing parental support.



Learn more about health disparities from the HHS Office of Minority Health.

### Numbers of Uninsured and Poor

Although racial and ethnic minority groups make up only a third of the U.S. population, they account for more than half of those with no health insurance.

Of the 49 million uninsured in 2009, nearly 27 million were racial and ethnic minorities. Hispanics fare worse than other minority groups: they have the highest uninsured rate in the country at 34 percent, compared to 23 percent of Blacks and 14 percent of Whites.

The likelihood of being uninsured increases as income levels drop: almost half of adults living in poverty in 2009 were uninsured, and the poverty rate for racial and ethnic minorities is more than double the poverty rate of Whites.

The child support program has a high participation rate among poor, single-parent families. In 2008, over one third of families in the child support program had incomes at or below the federal poverty level (FPL). In addition, 84 percent of poor custodial families participated in the child support program (including 82 percent of poor Hispanic and 88 percent of poor Black custodial families).

### Our Program's Interaction with Men

The child support program is also one of the few public programs that maintain contact with both parents. This interaction provides an opportunity to reach an audience often missed by other social service programs—noncustodial parents, usually men.

*continued on next page*



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Office of Child Support Enforcement



**One way to effectively boost health coverage among low-income children: broaden health insurance programs so their parents are covered.**

One [study](#) found that, compared to insured fathers, uninsured fathers “are more likely to have a history of incarceration, more likely to have income below 100 percent of the FPL, less likely to be employed, and less likely to be married to the child’s mother.” These men are likely to interact with the child support program, which means our program can serve as an access point to help them obtain coverage and thereby contribute to the elimination of health disparities.

## Connecting Men to Coverage

Since many of the public health coverage options are targeted to women living with children, men who do not live with children are particularly vulnerable to being uninsured. Low-paying, low-skill jobs usually provide minimal or no health coverage, another reason why low-income men have higher rates of uninsurance. Unfortunately, these same jobs are also disproportionately occupied by minorities.

The child support program has the potential to reach a significant number of men since our contact with families is longer than most programs, starting at birth and continuing until the children reach the age of majority. This provides ample opportunities to reach men and connect them to coverage. Partnering with agencies and community- and faith-based organizations is key to effectively connecting families and low-income men to appropriate social service programs.



**Visit the [HHS Center](#) for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships**

Our role in linking low-income families to coverage will intensify as implementation of the Affordable Care Act continues; by 2014, Medicaid eligibility will expand to include all near-poor eligible adults. Low-income adults who do not live with children will become newly eligible for public coverage. The child support program will have a unique opportunity to educate this group about the expansion of Medicaid.

## Cover Parents, Cover Children

Research suggests that increasing access to health care coverage for low-income men can ultimately improve their health, productivity, and ability to support themselves and their children.

Another benefit of helping parents obtain coverage is that children’s continuity of coverage improves when their parents have health coverage. Research demonstrates that an effective way to boost health coverage for low-income children is to expand public coverage options to their parents. For instance, states that expanded their Medicaid program to low-income parents experienced a boost in enrollment of eligible low-income children when compared to states that did not provide this option for parents.

**35** The percent of people who identified themselves as belonging to a racial or ethnic minority group in 2009.



The child support program serves 17 million children: one in four children and half of all poor children in the United States. Of social welfare programs, child support ranks second only to Medicaid as serving the most children. With a significant reach to children and parents, the child support program has an opportunity to connect low-income families (including fathers) to coverage and help eliminate health disparities.

As we move forward with the implementation of health reform, we will continue to reach out to our federal and state partners and work with community- and faith-based organizations to identify opportunities for partnership and to increase awareness of expanded health coverage options available to low-income families, particularly low-income fathers.

*For more information about this article, contact [crystal.rodriguez@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:crystal.rodriguez@acf.hhs.gov).*

## Minority Male Health: We Can Help to Paint a Brighter Picture



April is National Minority Health Month. The front-page article paints a clear picture about how lack of access to affordable health care exacerbates the health and income disparities in this country. The article also

highlights how the child support program can help to brighten the picture of health for minority men—by referring noncustodial parents to health care services.

This potential role in connecting children and both parents to health care coverage is especially important since the Affordable Care Act will provide many new options for health care coverage.

We know that the ability to work and pay child support can be affected by chronic poor health. Employers have begun to recognize that the quality of health care their workers receive is important to employee health, productivity, performance, and business outcomes. We also know that children's continuity of coverage improves when their parents have health coverage. Research shows that an effective way to boost health coverage for low-income children is to expand public coverage options for their parents.

Because the child support program is one of the few public systems that reach large numbers of low-income men, we are uniquely positioned to become a key access point for male health care referrals.

To explore the role of the child support program as an information and referral point for parents seeking to access affordable health care options, OCSE is entering into a new partnership with the HHS Office of Minority Health. Take a look at the

[website](#) and let me know what you think; leave your comment at the end of this Commissioner's Voice [blog](#).

Health care coverage referrals should be part of a family-centered, more holistic approach to services. You may be interested in the [White House blog](#) on What Health Reform Means for African Americans.

We can also spread the word about grant opportunities. Understanding the health behaviors of racial and ethnic minority males is the premise behind upcoming [NIH grants](#) for testing culturally and linguistically appropriate health-promoting interventions to reduce health disparities among racially and ethnically diverse males.

As the front-page article stresses, partnerships are key to this holistic approach. OCSE continues to seek collaborative opportunities with federal and state agencies as well as community organizations that also serve our customers. For the "bubble chart" (on this page) to be successful, we'll need to continue to create and strengthen relationships with other programs that serve the families who come into the child support program, such as Medicaid, CHIP, Head Start, SNAP (food stamps), WIC, and SSI.

As OCSE continues to work on updating our medical support policy and regulations to increase health care coverage for the children in our caseload, we recognize that we also can serve children by helping their parents stay healthy.

I for one am excited that we have joined the health disparities discussion. I look forward to working with other leaders to reduce health disparities and bridge the gap between families and health care and other social services. We can help to paint a brighter picture of minority male health.

**Vicki Turetsky**

Share your thoughts on the  
Commissioner's Voice [blog](#)





## Osage Nation Offers TIP to Help Parents Avoid Incarceration

By Greg Kidder, Director  
*Osage Nation Child Support Services*



**Greg Kidder**

Since 2007, Osage Nation Child Support Services (Oklahoma) has been refining a program that offers noncustodial parents a second chance to meet their unpaid monthly obligations and avoid incarceration.

Through this collaborative Tribal Intervention Program

(TIP), Child Support Services works with the Osage Nation Counseling Center and Trial Court to help bring noncustodial parents back to a productive level. Preliminary data show positive results. On average, payments from TIP participants have increased by 81 percent.

### TIP Process

After a noncustodial parent pleads guilty to failure to pay child support, the judge can order the parent to participate in TIP. The parent must sign a contract stipulating to requirements and possible costs associated with compliance.

The program begins with a behavioral assessment by the Osage Nation Counseling Center, as Child Support Services wants to discover possible underlying issues that affect the parent's ability to pay child support. The assessment screens clients for substance-abuse tendencies and behavioral issues. Then the assessment team can recommend that the parent participate in a behavioral therapy course, anger management course, drug and alcohol class, and/or a life skills class that teaches positive living habits.

In addition to receiving the assessment, an unemployed parent must make a strong effort to get back into the workforce. The parent must report weekly to the TIP coordinator and participate in mandatory job searches. Job search criteria may differ for each client because some may be geographically challenged by the amount of work in their region. If employed, the parent must still report

weekly to the TIP coordinator with status changes and meet a large percentage of his child support obligation.

Child Support Services reports this information to the court each month and makes a recommendation based on the parent's willingness to participate in the program. Willingness is assessed in five areas: Is the parent employed? Did the parent make an attempt to pay toward his child support and how much did he pay? Was his job search satisfactory? Was his contact with the child support office satisfactory? Did he complete the behavior assessment and attend his weekly class.

With answers to these questions, Child Support

Services develops a recommendation for the court. If

the parent is in full compliance, the agency asks the court for a 30, 60, or 90-day review and the parent is given notice to return. If the parent is partially complying, Child Support Services can ask for the deferred sentence to be accelerated so the parent is sentenced to weekend incarceration, with a notice for a 30-day review. And finally, if the parent is

not complying, Child Support Services will ask

if the parent's deferred sentence can be accelerated to enforce a 30-day or 6-month incarceration. Should the parent fail to appear in any court hearing, Child Support Services will ask that a bench warrant be issued for failure to appear.



### Potential for TIP

The goal of the Tribal Intervention Program is to provide fundamental resources to noncustodial parents owing child support and try to deter jail time. Jail is a last resort. Unfortunately, even with preventive measures, incarceration is sometimes unavoidable. The program's option for weekend incarceration can give first-time offenders a formidable experience with hopes of deterring a longer stay.

Osage Nation Child Support Services continues to add modules to its program. Discussion is under way to potentially add community service as a sentencing option through work with the local county.

For more information, please contact Greg Kidder at [gkidder@osagetribe.org](mailto:gkidder@osagetribe.org) or 877-287-5458.

## Northern Arapaho Tribe to Host NTCSA Conference in June

For the past 10 years, the National Tribal Child Support Association's (NTCSA) conference has brought together tribal child support professionals who are committed to uniting tribal, state, and federal programs as the voice for Indian children.

This June 26-30, the Northern Arapaho Tribal Child Support Enforcement Office will host the 11th Annual NTCSA Training Conference and Membership Meeting in Denver, CO.

Learn more about the **Northern Arapaho Tribe**



Topics will address domestic violence, legal ethics, access and visitation, data safeguarding, holistic approaches, tribal child support systems, and more. Attendees will see motivational presentations by Chance Lee Rush, an advocate for healthy living; Howard T. Rainer of the Native American Educational Outreach Programs at Brigham Young University, and promoter

of educational opportunities, personal enhancement, and spiritual growth; and D.J. Eagle Bear Vanas, an Odawa Indian from Michigan who uses traditional warrior concepts and wisdom to inspire others to achieve their best in life and career.

In the Northern Arapaho Tribe, the oral storytelling and other cultural traditions may be slowly fading away. And, like much of the country, the tribe is on a reservation where unemployment remains high, economic opportunities are limited, and budgets are tight.

However, "NTCSA conference goers will be able to experience the rich history of the Northern Arapaho Tribe," says Lee Spoonhunter, NTCSA Vice President and Arapaho Tribal Child Support Director. And they will see for themselves that "job creation and economic development are a high priority on the reservation."



Look for registration material on the **NTCSA website**.

## Spread the Word ...



**E**very child support agency considers advertising to get the word out about its services. Whether your agency advertises through web media, distribution of brochures and posters, or radio and TV spots, two equally important elements can help you advertise as effectively as possible: *creativity* and *placement*. Take a look at the "**Communications**" tab on the online Hispanic Child Support Resource Center for tips that can help your agency reach out to all populations of child support program customers.



## ... About Child Support Services

## D.C. Makes a Movie to Show Customers the Changing Face of Child Support Services



By Elaine Blackman  
OCSE

Customers who come in to the waiting room at the District of Columbia Child Support Services Division may feel a little more at ease these days about what to expect during their visit. While they wait, they'll be able to catch a few minutes, or perhaps the entire 30-minutes, of a new movie that highlights various aspects of the program and introduces the child support staff—in a light and entertaining way.

The homemade movie was created, scripted, filmed, edited and performed entirely by staff members. The only equipment needed, according to movie director Kevin McIntyre, was a high-definition digital camera and an editing software package; the only scenery: well-lit offices and hallways, and a sunny spot outside of the office building.

You can watch the movie on the [CSSD website](#).

### World Premiere at CSSD

On Feb. 7, the movie committee rolled out the red carpet for the 39 movie stars and invited the rest of the 200-plus CSSD staff members and other guests to the world premiere of “CSSD The Movie.” The theater (a large conference room) sparkled with hanging decorations, a

“walk of fame,” and a table full of awards—and a popcorn machine.

In her introduction, movie co-producer Angelisa Young explained that the movie addresses “early intervention” in child support cases, one of the strategies of the national child support program’s Project to Avoid Increasing Delinquencies.

### Roll Camera...Action

The movie opens with CSSD Director Benidia Rice welcoming customers to the office. Next, Tanya Jones Bosier (Policy, Outreach, and Training Section Chief) explains that the goal of the production is to “change the face of the agency from an enforcement agency to an empowerment agency.”

And what follows next are presentations and role-playing scenes that explain to customers the variety of CSSD activities, including its First Response Unit, Intake, Locate, Interstate, Enforcement, Wage Withholding, Legal Services, and the State Disbursement Unit. The movie also refers to CSSD initiatives such as the fathering court and outreach to homeless veterans.

After the premiere—and the surprise ending of “bloopers” for this audience—Young and McIntyre (both from the Policy, Outreach, and Training Section)



CSSD staff members at the premiere of “CSSD The Movie” included director Kevin McIntyre (*left*), co-producer Angelisa Young (*far right*), and actor Patricia Williams.





presented the actors with Oscar-like awards throughout audience cheers and applause.

“This movie production is another way to reach customers in an engaging manner while keeping up enthusiasm among the staff,” says Director Rice.

A few days earlier, CSSD staff threw another event,

this one for the greater D.C. community, to launch its Outreach Van (see the article in the March Child Support Report.) Customers in the van also can watch the movie while they wait.

*For more information, please contact Kevin McIntyre, 202-442-7091 or [james.mcintyre@dc.gov](mailto:james.mcintyre@dc.gov). Valerie Merritt (OCSE Region III) contributed to this article.*



**Staff members play the roles of customers and workers in these movie screen shots. See the movie on the CSSD [website](#).**



## U.S. Supreme Court Hears South Carolina Case

The U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments on March 23 on *Turner v. Rogers* to review a decision of the South Carolina Supreme Court holding that an indigent noncustodial parent does not have the right to court-appointed representation before being jailed for civil contempt for willful failure to pay child support.

The Petitioner argued that due process protections under the 14th Amendment require that the court appoint an attorney for an indigent defendant in a civil contempt proceeding that may result in incarceration.

The federal government's [brief](#) argued reversal of the South Carolina court's decision contending that, while due

process does not require the appointment counsel, due process requires the state to have sufficient procedure to assist the court in determining that the noncustodial parent has the present ability to pay the purge amount at the time of the hearing. Such procedures may require the noncustodial parent to complete a financial affidavit form.

The Supreme Court's decision is expected in July. All



of the briefs filed in the case are posted on the American Bar Association [webpage](#), and a transcript of the hearing is available on this link to the Supreme Court [proceedings](#). In a few weeks, an audio of the March 23 oral argument should be available on this Supreme Court [media website](#).

# Puerto Rico's Child Support Kiosks—Quick and Easy for Customers

By Elaine Blackman  
*OCSE*  
Jens Feck  
*OCSE Region II*

In every mall, hotel or airport, you're likely to see a self-service, interactive kiosk—a computer terminal within a public exhibit that gives its customers access to information and applications. Child support agencies, too, have begun placing kiosks in high-traffic locations to make it more convenient for customers to connect with their local office. The Puerto Rico Administration for Child Support (known as ASUME) is one that can attest to its success.

## Kiosk Locations and Services

In the summer of 2010, ASUME started setting up kiosks as part of its intensive customer outreach plan. Now the agency maintains 21 kiosks: one in its central

office in San Juan, 10 in regional offices, 8 in local offices, and 2 in City Halls in the municipalities of Loiza and Yauco. In 2011, the office projects 10 more kiosks will be installed throughout the archipelago to include the islands of Vieques and Culebra, and one at Plaza Las Americas, the largest shopping mall in the Caribbean.

ASUME also places kiosks in malls on certain occasions, staffed by child support workers who have laptops with full access to the Puerto Rico Automated Child Support System. Since most of the self-service kiosks are in child support offices, staff can assist with them if necessary.

Customers at the self-service kiosks can see a payment history, make online payments, and print coupons to accompany their payments by mail or at the bank. They can also print “no-debt child support certifications.”

“Certifications are a very important service for all residents in Puerto Rico. Child support certifications are required for all state government transactions such as driver's, recreational, and professional licenses; employment; housing; academic scholarships; and business loans, among other individual and small business benefits,” says Waddy Mercado, ASUME Administrator.

The kiosks also can help employers to more easily and quickly connect with the ASUME office. An employer can notify the child support office that an employee with an income withholding order is no longer employed. And the employer can obtain a printed certification necessary to acquire certain commercial or government permits for the employer to do business. The employer needs the certification to show it has fulfilled its income withholdings for child support payments. ASUME plans to expand services for employers so they'll be able to pay income withholding orders at the kiosks.

## The Bottom Line

For Puerto Rico, the kiosks offer a low-cost and cost-effective customer service initiative. The cost is minimal since ASUME is using equipment already owned by the agency, which became available due to a reduction in staff and limited budget; the software was developed in-house by agency IT personnel. The initiative has given staff time for essential functions that cannot be automated, for



**Parents can make a child support payment and print a “certification” document at the many kiosks in Puerto Rico. Employers, too, can make transactions at the kiosks.**





“ASUME’s main objective is to provide the best

*For more information about the ASUME kiosks, please contact Fernando Cogley, Assistant Administrator for Planning and Evaluation, [fcogley@asume.gobierno.pr](mailto:fcogley@asume.gobierno.pr).*



child support worker—and saving \$1,217,500. Up-to-date demographic information for members ensures that clients receive critical case-related information timely. Since its inception, payees have provided about 90,000 address updates on the website. The estimated total savings for the payees' ability to update their address is \$350,875.

Members in child support cases are often required to attend court hearings, and when the parties don't appear for scheduled hearings, it costs the state money. Every no-show causes about 45 minutes of additional work (includes worker's time, updating the system, delay in court proceedings, etc.). To address this costly issue, the

website sends e-mail reminders, which have decreased the no-show rate at scheduled events by about 25 percent. The total savings from sending e-reminders is about \$15,622,500.

The website provides accurate, timely and meaningful information to child support customers in a cost-effective manner while still providing personalized service to each customer. The total cost for implementing the website was about \$7 million, while the subsequent savings already exceed \$17 million.

*For more information, please contact Jabeen Khan, Bureau of Information Systems, PA Department of Public Welfare, at 717-772-6511 or [mkhan@state.pa.us](mailto:mkhan@state.pa.us).*

## In Focus

# Princeton Students Present Their Research to OCSE

**By Kate Cristol**  
*Graduate Student*  
*Princeton University*

On Feb. 11, a team of five graduate students, including myself, working with Dr. Hillard Pouncy at the Wilson School of Public Affairs at Princeton University joined Commissioner Turetsky and staff at OCSE for an afternoon of discussion and presentations about our research.

Our research represented collaborations with helpful and enthusiastic members of OCSE, and the afternoon

of discussion led to a spirited and energetic conversation about how our findings might assist the agency's larger work.

The following are summaries of our presentations and recommendations.

## Parent Education

Christina Burgess discussed parent education programs for never-married and divorcing couples that are designed to encourage noncustodial parent access. Her research demonstrated that the nature of the parent relationship is one of the most important factors affecting noncustodial parent involvement with the child, and that, while results are mixed regarding increased access, education programs are successful at improving parent relationships, increasing child support payments, and improving child behavior.

To improve the efficacy of these programs, Burgess recommended that OCSE focus on building relationships among stakeholder agencies, sharing curricula and information across states, improving evaluation and quality controls, and engaging effective community-based organizations as providers.

## Locate Resources

Katie Cristol offered findings from her state-level research regarding the use of child support agency locate resources in child welfare cases. Her research drew on conversations with state child support agency



**From left, Dr. Hillard Pouncy, Christina Burgess, Laura Noonan (back), OCSE's Commissioner Vicki Turetsky and Jennifer Burnszynski, Bernard Ashby, and Kate Cristol. Not pictured is Sarah Rich.**

representatives and secondary reports in 11 states, and investigated why child welfare agencies aren't using the locate resources more often for placement and other purposes.

She shared the major obstacles to such use, including lack of clarity about who may access locate resources, limitations or absence of a locate-only process, a cumbersome process and lack of usable information, caseworkers' ability to get better information elsewhere, and general challenge of making locate cases a priority—and concluded with some promising practices for improving collaboration.

## Prevention Education

Laura Noonan presented on the potential to prevent the need for child support services by combining sexual education and child support education, which emphasizes the legal, emotional, and financial costs of parenting into a comprehensive program.

She presented research showing that “unintended” pregnancies are more common among couples who are at least somewhat ambivalent about becoming pregnant, and tied this back to shocking statistics about the number of teenagers who say they would be pleased if they found out today that they or their partner were pregnant. She concluded that a comprehensive program might be the answer, as it would present students with both the “why” and the “how” of pregnancy prevention.

## Job Programs

Sarah Rich presented a paper in which she reviewed two bodies of literature: reports that have evaluated transitional jobs programs and those that have evaluated employment programs designed specifically for low-income, noncustodial parents.

Drawing from this literature, Rich offered suggestions and considerations in designing and implementing transitional work programs that target this particular population. She recommended that a successful transitional work program should combine a subsidized work component with intensive job placement, retention, and advancement services.

Finally, Rich concluded that the organizations that are awarded money to implement such programs should have well-established experience working with this particular population, as well as working with local child support agencies.

## Minority Health

Bernard Ashby discussed findings from his research,

in partnership with the Office of Minority Health, about lower limb amputations. He reviewed evidence that such amputations are mainly the result of vascular disease and diabetes and that the life expectancy of dysvascular amputees is markedly decreased.

Ashby recommended a comprehensive policy that: 1) educates the patients and the public; 2) educates and incentivizes physicians; and 3) uses electronic medical records to coordinate the care of patients, suggesting that such an intervention would go a long way in decreasing disparities and preventing many unnecessary amputations, thus saving lives.

This research was well received by OCSE, who found it to be relevant to efforts in improving services for low-income and minority fathers, as well as its future interagency partnerships.

## Learning Occasion for All

Both the Princeton students and OCSE counterparts enjoyed the opportunity to visit and discuss these findings and expressed enthusiasm that this work could help OCSE's efforts to improve outcomes for the children and parents it serves.

This is the sixth year that Dr. Pouncy and his students have traveled to OCSE to present their findings and recommendations on child support program-related research.

### *Child Support Report*



*Child Support Report* is published monthly by the Office of Child Support Enforcement, Division of Consumer Services. We welcome articles and high-quality digital photos. We reserve the right to edit for style, content, and length. Contents are for informational purposes only; no official endorsement of a practice or individual by the Department of Health and Human Services or OCSE is intended. You are welcome to reprint articles; please identify *Child Support Report* as the source.

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